Serra Center Scoop

Courtland preps to join a Black Lives Matter protest in June
COVID-19 has turned our world upside down. It has imposed dramatic changes in our lives. When a beloved member of my family recently passed away due to a terminal illness, I became painfully aware of the dramatic changes COVID-19 has also imposed on dealing with the end of life.

As painful and disruptive as it is to allow ourselves the time to grieve, grief is our body and mind’s way of giving ourselves space and time to absorb the full impact of the loss, to accept the new reality, and to build new meaning in our lives.

In a way COVID-19 has impacted us like a death. The inability to have contact with close friends or family members, this new reality of maintaining a social and physical distance, has produced feelings of sadness, despair, agitation, uncertainty and the struggle to find meaning.

The process of adapting to loss takes time, although it seems that many of my friends with developmental disabilities are adapting fairly well! In my visits I have been greeted with smiling faces, happy moods and overwhelming enthusiasm to share the new and creative things being done around the house and new talents realized in the process.

It is a joyful and welcome reminder that physical distancing does not mean emotional distancing. Staying connected with friends and loved ones in any form available is so important to our adapting. In personal reflection, life before COVID-19 seemed like it was getting a little too fast for the people and things who matter most.

If we can draw any meaning from this time of COVID-19, it has certainly been the awareness and gift of time. Specifically, the meaning that this experience will have on how we choose to spend it.

In 24-hour care we are always planning and preparing for emergencies and natural disasters. Serra Center has proven to be a capable and prepared adversary for COVID-19. Our dedicated and diligent team members recognized the seriousness of a pandemic and have been on the front lines since the shelter order began. The 6-day work weeks and 12-hour work days mean Serra Center team members are spending the majority of their time at work; then going home to take care of their family members.

I am awe inspired by the tremendous responsibility and commitment displayed by my teammates. In our conversations, many team members have shared this similar sentiment, “If it weren’t for the clients, I don’t know how I’d make it through this.”

While I couldn’t agree more, I don’t know how Serra Center would make it through this without this team of caregivers. It is because of them that all Serra Center clients and staff remain virus free. Despite the dramatic changes in our lives, every extra precaution we’re taking is working.

With a most grateful heart, thank you to my Serra Center teammates and the stakeholders who have consistently shown their support during this critical time.

I hope you find your meaning in the time of COVID-19... while we still have time.

Be Well,
JOHN HILTUNEN came to Serra Center in 1976 and his life was forever changed. He could simply be himself. He became part of the "Serra Center family" and met his future wife, Carol, here, where they were married in 1986.

John was also an accomplished artist, selling all over the country.

Last year he was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. He was so strong throughout his entire treatment regimen — always with a positive attitude. But to every client and staff member’s crushing sorrow, he succumbed this last May.

John was cared for with diligence, tenderness and respect. Our team worked around the clock with him to ensure that he was as comfortable and pain free as possible. Grecia, Natalya, Estrella, Rose, Marina, Shahnaz, Mikayla, Christine, Mercy, and Kevin were on hand for all his many appointments, treatments and therapy.

John always maintained a positive attitude, treating everyone with honor and appreciation. That attitude defines John throughout his entire life — through the good times and the bad.

Kind, gentle, always considerate. We are so fortunate to have had him in our Serra Center family for 44 years!

DIANE FARRINGTON was born and raised on the East Coast, coming to Serra Center in 1993 at the age of 42. She was determined to settle down and spend the rest of her life here...and she did.

Her #1 goal was to enjoy her life to the fullest and she certainly fulfilled that goal.

Her favorite pastime was browsing magazines and books. If she could do it while eating In-N-Out Burger or drinking coffee -- even better! She was famous for her immense collection of stuffed animals, and she always had one with her (each one was affectionately named, such as “Rose Strawberry Shortcake”, pictured here).

When Diane came to Serra Center, she was rather private, keeping mostly to herself. She gradually opened up, happily socializing with her housemates and day program friends and expressing her honest and true self. Everyone around her saw her blossom into a very sociable individual.

While her failing health over the last year took a physical toll on her, she seemed fairly content emotionally. Her final words were, “I am happy now”, said with her sweet smile.

Diane is truly missed by us all. Ellen House will never be the same!

Like for all of us, the world is a different place for the men and women we serve during this COVID-19 era. One of the highlights of the year for some is a 12-week Art Workshop, sponsored by Olive Hyde Art Guild. 25 of Serra Center's artists gather each week in the spring to create art and enjoy each other's company. Not this year.

In lieu of this art workshop, Olive Hyde Art Guild generously donated supplies for the artists to utilize while sheltering at home. Serra Center added to this art supply cache to allow for three weeks’ worth of art projects. If you've ever attended our Heart & Soul Art Reception, you know how much the artists love to sell their artwork (as they keep all proceeds from their art sales).

This year, the artists are having a blast creating art at home. We'll get some of their best art online for sale in September...just in time for our "virtual" Heart & Soul Art Sale/Fundraiser (in lieu of our Heart & Soul Art Reception.) Below are some photos of them getting their creative juices flowing. Enjoy!
Serra Center presents
Heart & Soul Art Sale & Fundraiser
(The COVID-19 alternative to our Heart & Soul Art Reception)

Coming in September... Stay home, be safe and support!
You are cordially invited to NOT attend our Reception
ATTIRE: Pajamas. Masks NOT required.
WHERE: In the comfort of your own home.
WHY: Our Serra Center artists are having a blast creating art at home with supplies donated by Olive Hyde Art Guild and Serra Center. Since all events were cancelled this year, we want to maintain at least one exciting element for our artists. (They LOVE showing off and selling their art at the Reception.)

One piece of artwork from each Serra Center artist will be for sale along with opportunities to show your support for Serra Center and all of the people we serve. Details coming soon on art sales...

SPONSORS

INFO: Leslie McGarry: 510-477-1000 x130 or lmcgarry@serracenter.org
TO DONATE: http://weblink.donorperfect.com/ArtSaleFundraiser

Special Thanks!
So much gratitude to many of you who contributed to Serra Center over these last five months.

Some of you have donated multiple times as the shelter orders continued.

And then there are some family members of our clients who donated stimulus checks (both personal and from their loved ones whom we care for).

We could not do this without you!

We are so grateful for your investment in the work we do and the care we provide.

Here’s to you!

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2 WAYS TO DONATE:
MAIL Please use the enclosed remittance envelope
ONLINE www.serracenter.org

For more information, please contact Leslie McGarry: 510-477-1000 x130 or lmcgarry@serracenter.org

What your gift can provide:
$500 One month of ILS Services for an individual
$320 One week of groceries for a Residential Care Home
$100 One month of utilities for a Residential Care Home
$25 One month supply of prescriptions